

Weekly Police Beat for the week ending May 20, 2022

Chevy Chase Zip Code a Target for Thefts from Blue USPS Mailboxes

Hand mail to your carrier, take it to the post office, or pay by computer

For as long as we've been alive, we've trusted that, when we drop outgoing mail into a large, blue steel mailbox owned by the United States Postal Service, the item will be safe in the box, and it will arrive at its destination. That is not the case anymore.

In recent months, a national trend has emerged where postal carriers are robbed of the special keys that open these blue mailboxes. The thieves will either use the keys to steal mail from the blue boxes to commit financial fraud through forged checks or identity theft, or they will sell the mailbox keys on the Internet for other criminals to use. These special keys, called 'arrow keys', open all mailboxes within an entire zip code. This type of crime can be very profitable for the thieves, and very harmful for the innocent victims.

A recent Washington Post article (link below) details how the thieves operate and that they are targeting areas where the property values are high, such as Chevy Chase. The Postal Inspection Service is working with area police agencies to identify those responsible for this crime. The Postal Inspection Service also advises customers to follow the below advice to avoid being a victim of mail theft and the related financial consequences:

- Do not place outgoing mail in USPS mailboxes or in your private mailbox or mail slot;
- Hand outgoing mail to your mail carrier or mail it at the post office;
- Make electronic payments rather than mailing checks;
- Ask your bank for 'secure' checks that are more difficult to alter; and
- Report stolen mail by calling 877-876-2455.

Washington Post article:

<https://www.washingtonpost.com/dc-md-va/2022/05/01/chevy-chase-mailbox-stolen-checks/>